

HOMELESS VOICES FOR JUSTICE NEWSLETTER



CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

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THE BASICS

Who we are: Homeless Voices for Justice (HVJ) is a grassroots organization that works for social change with, and on behalf of, people experiencing homelessness and poverty. HVJ is led by organizers who have all experienced homelessness. The founding group in Portland has existed for 30 years, and we network in other locations across Maine. We seek to empower people experiencing homelessness and poverty whose perspectives are often excluded from the development of policies and programs that impact their social and economic wellbeing. Disenfranchisement, oppression, and marginalization create this absence. Therefore, we hope to assert ourselves and our interests in Maine politics through protest, education, positive policy change and reform.

When we meet: Every Monday, 9:30-11:30am; contact us for the schedule of locations; all are welcome to attend.

Come talk with us: Interested in advocacy or HVJ? Questions about what we do? Issues you would like to see us address? Email HVJ@preblestreet.org!

THE ADVOCATES

Eric Brewer

Jim Devine

Lisa Franklin

Cheryl Harkins

Ben Martineau

Mike Stuckmeyer

“PORTLAND, MAINE”

By Mike Stuckmeyer

10/15/2025
By MIKE STUCKMEYER





A JOURNEY FROM HOMELESSNESS TO HOUSING

By Eric Brewer

To all who are interested in how I went from homelessness to housing in one year, I will give a brief story of my journey. I have been successfully housed for five years as of November 30, 2025.

Before June 2016, I lived in an apartment with my aging parents, taking care of their needs. We had nursing staff and home care coming into our apartment weekly. Eventually, by December of 2015, my father passed away in hospice care. In June of 2016, my mother passed away in hospice care in Scarborough. I was still living in the apartment with a large void in my life. The apartment was a constant reminder of my former good life with my parents. I began to drink too much, too often. It wasn't long before I called the crisis hotline in Maine known as Opportunity Alliance. A worker came to visit and suggested that I get back on disability benefits.

In June/July 2016, I went to work full time as an auto parts delivery driver for NAPA in Scarborough. I lasted about a year and my doctor intervened and told me to apply for disability again. I finally asked Social Security for an expedited reinstatement in June 2017. I was paid until the people at Social Security decided my case. In the meantime, I stopped drinking completely. I began attending groups at the Portland Recovery Community Center located on Forest Avenue in downtown Portland. I began volunteering. Life was still a mess and I needed to do lots of work on my sobriety, and my behaviors too.



May 1st, 2019, I moved into a sober house in Portland, Maine, near the corner of Forest Avenue and Lincoln Street. I lasted a month in the sober house and then became homeless. The sober house was full of bed bugs and people using and selling drugs out of the building. I didn't want to drink or use anymore so I went to the Portland Recovery Community Center at 468 Forest Avenue, not too far from the Lincoln Street sober house. Later, I was again unsheltered for a short time but soon moved into another sober house at 6 Horton Place in the West End neighborhood in Portland.

After living at Horton Place for several months, one of my roommates suggested I try to find a place in subsidized housing. While looking for apartments, I filled out a lot of online applications, while collecting email contacts in housing and using the contacts to find housing. Using the computers at the recovery center in Portland, I consistently kept up contact with AVESTA and other housing providers. That place was a life saver. After four months I landed at an AVESTA property in Portland. I have been here ever since.

It has been difficult to remain housed and I had to learn a lot about living in subsidized housing. There are a lot of rules here. I don't smoke cigarettes or vape anymore, and I have remained sober. I have great friends who support me. They are my best friends. One thing I recommend is to stay away from people who use drugs or are into drama and chaos. Just like the streets, letting people into my apartment can and will jeopardize my housing status.

My other suggestion to any one seeking housing on their own is to find a housing officer while staying in the shelter. People really do care about you, including me. All my best to you in your housing search.



PORTLAND TO OPEN AN EMERGENCY WARMING SHELTER

By Lisa Franklin

The City of Portland will open a new overnight emergency warming shelter this winter, supported by a \$400,300 Maine Housing grant.

Located at 166 Riverside Industrial Parkway, the shelter will host up to 60 people on the coldest nights—when temps drop to 15° Fahrenheit or below, or when 10+ inches of snow are forecasted. It will be open 7 p.m. to 6 a.m., with a shuttle service available to and from the site.

Community members can help by sharing updates, checking on neighbors, and staying alert to city warming announcements. Visit the portlandmaine.gov website for shelter updates. Learn more or get involved with Homeless Voices for Justice by emailing HVJ@preblestreet.org.

IMPROVING TRANSITIONAL SERVICES

By Ben Martineau

Since my first go around with homelessness, starting in the 2000s, I've been in support of more transitional services. Off and on from 2004 until early 2007, my then-partner and I were experiencing homelessness. We survived between either family sheltering us for short periods of time or interacting with the Oxford St. Shelter and Preble Street Resource Center.

In early 2007, I was awarded a Shelter Plus Care Certificate from Shalom House. I managed to hold onto that for about 11 years. I had watched more than one person or couple lose their voucher or certificate for allowing others to stay with them and violate lease rules with stay length, noise, or damage to apartment. We learned to be careful with whoever we let visit, what we do while they visit, and respecting our lease.

Homelessness in itself can be traumatic. People, events, and acquired habits can warp someone's sense of normalcy. Something similar can be said about those experiencing incarceration. If trauma happens over an extended period, it can become the base for a new 'normal.' I believe there needs to be transitional services offered to people at the end of their perceived sense of normal and carried into when they start dealing with society's norms again.

To succeed, one needs housing, good overall health, and income. If society could help these folks with these needs during the last few months of homelessness or incarceration and carry the aid through at least the first three months of being back into the normal world, it could greatly reduce how many people fall back through the cracks and resort back to old negative behaviors.

Ideally, if there was a program or organization that could aid someone through the end of one life AND the beginning of a new life, that can make all the difference. If only casework paid more. If that helping hand just had the same helping face, trust could be better established and the aid would be more likely to help those needing it.

There are already services to help with those essential needs, but a lot more still can be done. I believe continuous aid for all these needs at once by consistently familiar faces could help miles more than what is being done now. Let's try to reach this better world.

Join us for Portland's Annual Homeless Persons' Memorial Vigil on Friday, December 19, 4:30 pm

The longest night of the year is a time to remember our unhoused friends who have died and recommit ourselves to the task of ending homelessness. A candlelight procession will start at the Maine Health-Preble Street Learning Collaborative at 20 Portland Street at 4:30 pm. It will proceed to Monument Square for a ceremony dedicated to those persons who have died in our community.

All persons who are homeless, who have been homeless, who work with people who are homeless, or who are thankful they are not homeless are welcome to participate. An ASL interpreter will be present for the ceremony.



INTERESTED IN JOINING HVJ?

WE MEET EVERY MONDAY
FROM 9:30 AM TO 11:30 AM

Contact us for the schedule of
locations

All are welcome to attend

(207) 899-6042
hvj@preblestreet.org